Original Article

Teaching Design of English Continuation Task in Senior High School Based on the Cultivation of Thinking Quality

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Abstract - The thinking quality, as an important part of core competencies, facilitates to improve students' ability to solve problems. However, there are still many problems in the cultivation of thinking quality in practical English teaching. As a new type of test item in the National College Entrance Examination in China, continuation task plays an important role in improving thinking quality. Therefore, based on the design of specific teaching activities, this study discusses the strategies to cultivate the students' thinking quality in the teaching of continuation tasks, creating an authentic context to activate thinking, sorting out the context to develop logical thinking, appreciating language to promote critical thinking and implementing continuation task to foster innovative thinking.

Keywords - Thinking quality, Continuation task, Senior English, Teaching design.

1. Introduction

National English Curriculum Standards for General Senior High School (2017 Edition) (hereinafter referred to as *National Curriculum Standard*) changes the curriculum goal from the comprehensive language application ability to the core competencies of English discipline, and the thinking quality is listed as one of the core competencies for the first time (Chen et al., 2019). At the same time, *National Curriculum Standard (2017 Edition)* points out the goal of thinking quality, which enables students to distinguish and analyze specific phenomena in language and culture, sort and summarize information, construct new concepts, analyze and infer the logical relationship of information, correctly evaluate various ideological viewpoints, creatively express one's own views, and have the awareness of diverse thinking and the ability to innovate thinking (Ministry of Education, 2018). It can be seen that the cultivation of thinking quality plays an important role in current English teaching, and how to develop students' thinking quality has become an important mission of English classroom teaching today.

In 2016, Zhejiang Province took the lead in reforming the English College Entrance Examination by introducing continuation tasks to replace the original corrected questions, greatly increasing the proportion of writing in the English College Entrance Examination. Afterwards, continuation tasks gradually became a new writing teaching method advocated by both teachers and students. Continuation task is a method of combining reading comprehension with writing practice, providing new ideas and methods for English writing teaching (Shi, 2020).

Continuation task not only requires students to understand the given reading text fully but also to grasp the text's theme and analyze the author's emotional attitude. When students make transitions, they need to maintain consistency with the original language style, stylistic structure, and plot ideas (Liu et al., 2019). From this, it can be inferred that the continuation task is not a simple understanding and production activity but a complex thinking activity. The successful continuation cannot be achieved without the guidance of thinking quality. Therefore, continuation tasks can be a significant way to cultivate thinking quality, and how to achieve the cultivation of thinking quality in the teaching of continuation tasks has become a topic of concern for teachers.

However, there are many problems in the current continuation task teaching, and the primary reason is that teachers do not train students' thinking quality in the process of continuation task teaching. For students, they still rely on fixed templates for mechanical imitation writing, which can make up for the lack of vocabulary and grammar errors in the writing process, but hinder the development of students' thinking quality. What is more, once students get used to this writing mode, they will gradually lose their ability to logical reasoning and free expression. Meanwhile, for teachers their cognition of writing is still confined to memorizing and imitative writing of advanced vocabulary and key grammar, and they fail to teach discourse analysis and specific writing strategies to students, ignoring the significance of writing. Therefore, to improve students' ability to continue tasks, the cultivation of thinking quality plays an important role. Based on the reform of the new

College Entrance Examination writing mode, the continuation task provides a new platform for cultivating thinking quality. The purpose of this study is to explore how to cultivate students' thinking quality in the teaching of continuation tasks by designing specific teaching activities. Additionally, it aims to provide some enlightenment for teachers on the teaching strategy of continuation tasks and the training of thinking quality to improve the effectiveness of English writing teaching.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Related Research on Continuation Task Abroad and at Home

According to the literature review, there is no direct research on continuation tasks abroad, and scholars mostly conduct research from the perspective of integrating reading and writing. Since the 1980s, many foreign scholars have combined reading with writing, and their research focuses on the relationship between reading and writing. For example, Yoshimura (2009) found a reading method that can promote writing ability through an experiment on the combination of reading and writing. The experimental results show that checklist helps to integrate the reading and writing processes. Through experimental research, Pysarchyk & Yamshynska (2015) pointed out that integrating reading and writing skills can not only maximize the efficiency of language teaching but also cultivate students' language skills, ensuring their success in academic or professional communication or daily interaction. Jeongyeon (2015) integrated reading and writing through a teaching experiment and found that students taught by using extensive reading outperformed those taught by traditional methods in terms of content, organization, vocabulary and language use.

In contrast, the research on continuation tasks at home is more abundant, and its main research areas are divided into theoretical research and practical research. In terms of theoretical research, Chinese scholar Wang (2012) took the lead in proposing the concept of continuation task, that is, continuation task was a method of writing practice combined with reading comprehension. He believed that this method combined language input and output closely, combined language imitation and creative use properly, and combined language learning and application practically, which was a good way to improve the efficiency of foreign language learning. Based on the multiple intelligence theory, Huang (2017) analyzed the effects of continuation tasks on students' multiple intelligence, such as language, logic, interpersonal and self-cognition. In terms of practical research, many scholars have studied the influencing factors of continuation tasks. For example, Gu et al. (2022) explored the effect of topic familiarity on continuation tasks among Chinese EFL learners through comparative experimental methods. The study found that familiar topics can promote stronger interaction between learners and the text. In addition, many scholars have studied the application of continuation tasks in teaching. As a major reform of the

Zhejiang College Entrance Examination, its related teaching strategies and examination analysis have attracted more and more attention from front-line educators. For example, Jin (2017) put forward four dimensions of teaching strategies for continuation tasks, including grasping the article's theme, expanding the plot led by clues, imitating the language and detailed description. Bian & Chen (2017) adopted the teaching model of "overall grasp → thinking training → style imitation → collaborative assessment" to train students' thinking ability and language application abilities. Based on a comparative analysis of the task complexity between continuation task and letter writing, Zhou & He (2021) put forward a specific teaching strategy for continuation task, which was to guide students to sort out material information, carry out thinking training activities, and remind students to determine the writing points, to enhance students' acceptance of the new question type.

It can be seen that both the foreign concept of "integration of reading and writing" and the domestic concept of "continuation task" show the practicability and significance of combining reading and writing teaching in class. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct further research on the teaching of continuation tasks to provide some enlightenment for the teaching practice of front-line teachers.

2.2. Related Research on Thinking Quality Abroad and at Home

From the existing research at home and abroad, since thinking quality was put forward, the majority of scholars in the world have launched a wealth of research on it. At present, the research on the quality of thinking at home and abroad has a certain depth and breadth, which can be roughly divided into theoretical research and practical research.

In terms of theoretical research, many scholars have defined the concept of thinking quality. The earliest research on thinking quality was conducted by Soviet psychologists, who studied it from a psychological perspective. In the West, psychologist Guildford (1991) defined the concept of "thinking quality" from the perspective of children and adolescents; he deemed that thinking quality included characteristics such as flexibility, sensitivity, and fluency. Lin (1984), a domestic scholar, defined thinking quality as the expression of intellectual characteristics in individual thinking activities. In terms of its occurrence and development, the thinking quality was not only subject to certain common laws but also showed differences between individuals. Secondly, scholars have studied the classification of thinking quality. For instance, Lin (2005) found that thinking quality was the performance of intelligence and ability in individuals in intellectual activities, especially in thinking activities. It consisted of five components: agility, flexibility, creativity, criticality and profundity. Lu (2016) pointed out that different

thinking modes possessed different thinking qualities. Basic thinking qualities included accuracy, depth, agility, flexibility, criticality, etc. Based on the rationality, logic and criticality of English thinking, English education had significant advantages in cultivating thinking quality.

In terms of practical research, scholars have focused on research on ways of promoting thinking quality, research on the teaching practice of thinking quality, and research on the correlation between thinking quality and continuation tasks. Firstly, regarding the research on the ways of promoting thinking quality, Cheng (2015) discussed the role of English learning in promoting the development of students' thinking skills by combining the characteristics of the English language and the English learning process and specifically pointed out the promotion effect of English learning on the further development of students' ten thinking skills. Ge & Hong (2018) adopted innovative thinking in language as a theoretical framework to explore effective strategies to enhance students' thinking quality in reading teaching, that is, rationalizing text content to develop logical thinking, exploring text themes to cultivate critical thinking, encouraging students' imagination to enhance creative thinking. Secondly, regarding the research on the teaching practice of thinking quality, Yuan (2017) proposed that the design principles of English teaching activities guided by "thinking quality" specifically included deep interpretation of discourse, graphical explanation of content, hierarchical questioning, and contextualized design of activities. Based on the current situation and problems of thinking quality in primary school English teaching, Gong (2019) took the teaching of discourse as an example and put forward specific initiatives to improve thinking quality. Based on the teaching of discourse, Jia (2022) designed activities to develop students' logical, dialectical and creative thinking in PWP mode: pre-reading, while reading and post-reading. Thirdly, regarding the research on the correlation between thinking quality and continuation tasks. Dong & Zeng (2018) designed reading teaching activities based on the "mainline" of the story and cultivated students' thinking quality through topic navigation, theme exploration, language appreciation, and continuation task. Liu et al. (2019) discussed the strategies teachers employed to develop students' thinking quality in teaching continuation tasks, such as using continuation task strategies, setting up question chains, building thinking maps and taking advantage of group work.

To sum up, with the emergence of core competencies, more and more scholars devote themselves to studying thinking quality. There is no doubt that scholars at home and abroad are trying to explore how to put students' thinking qualities into practice in English teaching. However, with the introduction of new curriculum standards and new textbooks, the traditional writing teaching mode can not achieve the new goal of cultivating students' thinking quality. Therefore, it is necessary to gradually integrate the cultivation of thinking quality with

continuation tasks to achieve win-win goals. At present, the research on the thinking quality of high school students is mainly aimed at the single aspect of writing or reading. However, the correlation between the continuation task and the thinking quality is insufficient. Therefore, this study aims to cultivate students' thinking quality through the teaching practice of continuation tasks and to explore specific and effective ways to improve the English thinking quality of senior high school students.

3. Theoretical Basis

This research is mainly based on the Interactive Alignment Model, Input Hypothesis and Output Hypothesis.

Firstly, Pickering & Garrod (2004) put forward the Interactive Alignment Model, and they pointed out that conversation was the most basic and common way of using human language. However, due to the limitations of the learning environment, Wang (2010) suggested that continuation task was more conducive to students' language development. Continuation tasks can help to reinforce the interaction between the reader and the reading materials, the alignment between the reader and the plot, and the alignment between the language of the writing and the language of the reading.

Secondly, Krashen (1982) put forward the Input Hypothesis. He pointed out that the content of learners' learning should be slightly higher than the current level, and acquisition occurs only when students can truly understand the information. Therefore, when selecting materials that provide language input, the difficulty should be slightly higher than the students' acceptance level. It can stimulate their learning motivation so students can carry out comprehensible input.

Thirdly, American linguist Swain (1993) proposed the Output Hypothesis and deemed that although language input was important, it cannot fully develop learners' language ability, and effective language output was an indispensable part. The reading section of the continuation task gave learners the conditions for comprehensible input, but if there were no language output, the ultimate goal of the practical application of the language would be difficult to achieve. Thus, input and output were integrated processes that were equally important for language acquisition.

4. The Application Practice of Continuation Task Based on the Cultivation of Thinking Quality

As a new type of test item in the College Entrance Examination, the continuation task presents a new challenge to students' writing ability. However, students are not familiar with this type of question, and many students' problem-solving skills still rely on fixed templates, which limits the development of their thinking quality. This paper will explore how to develop students' logical, critical and

innovative thinking in teaching continuation tasks through the design of specific teaching activities.

4.1. Analysis of Teaching Material

According to the *National Curriculum Standard (2017 Edition)*, teachers need to interpret texts and design activities from the three dimensions of what, why and how.

What: The text is a narrative titled An Honest Mistake, which tells the story of Kaire's efforts to win a spelling competition and get a prize. However, when Kaire returned home and shared her joy with her mother, she found spelling errors. Then she was filled with contradictions, struggling with whether she deserved the award. The story's development stops after reaching its climax, and students need to continue writing two natural paragraphs.

Why: The thematic context of this story is human and self, and the sub-theme is good conduct and a correct attitude towards life. The article is based on the story conflict that Kaire won the prize through hard work and then learned that she made a spelling mistake, aiming to cultivate the good quality of honesty. The keyword "honesty" in this story not only corresponds to the title but also to the theme. Through the story's reversal, students understand that when interests conflict with honesty, we should choose honesty. As a result, it can help students establish the right values.

How: The genre of this article is narrative. In terms of narrative mode, this article uses the third person to make the article more objective and straightforward and make it easier for students to grasp the key point. In the narrative order, this paper adopts the combination of time order and space order. The ups and downs of the plot are highlighted through the transformation of time and space. Secondly, the article adopts a large amount of action, psychological, and language descriptions, reflecting Kaire's struggle from winning the competition to learning of her spelling mistakes, highlighting the value of honesty through emotional changes. In addition, the language of this article is concise and beautiful, with many short sentences and the use of similes.

4.2. Analysis of Students

The students come from Grade 2 in a high school whose English level is at the middle level. The students in this class are generally outgoing and cheerful, with an active mind, a strong interest in learning English and a willingness to express their own opinions. Through their first year of learning, they have had a basic understanding of the elements of narrative writing, have been exposed to continuation tasks, and can extract basic information from discourse and deal with simple questions. Moreover, they show a high level of enthusiasm for learning about honesty as a topic related to personal character development. However, their ability to integrate information is weak, and many students have difficulties expressing their views critically and creatively. In addition, students in this class have not yet formed stable values, whose perceptions of honesty and awareness of establishing the right values are still vague.

4.3. Teaching Objectives

Based on the analysis of the material and the students, the teaching objectives have been set. At the end of this lesson, the students can develop logical thinking by sorting out the context, grasping the plot's development and the characters' emotional changes. Besides, they are able to promote critical thinking by appreciating language skills and analyzing high-frequency vocabulary. Additionally, they are able to foster innovative thinking by implementing continuation tasks through question chains and evaluating each other in groups after writing.

4.4. Teaching Procedures
4.4.1. Creating an Authentic Context to Activate Thinking

At the beginning of the class, the teacher asks the students to answer these questions, for instance, "If you got 100 marks on the test and the teacher rewarded you, what gift would you ask for?" Then, the teacher shows the title An Honest Mistake and asks students, "What would you do if you found out that you made a mistake and the teacher did not notice it?"

For the first question, the students can express what they want as a prize and raise their interest in the topic. For the second question, students express different opinions, some mention it is about honesty, and they should explain it to the teacher and return the reward. Some point out that since the reward had been given and the teacher had not found out about it, they could pretend nothing had happened. The teacher uses the title prediction in conjunction with the questions to guide students to discuss and think about the topic of honesty. The first question is an open-ended question designed to stimulate students' interest, activate the schema, create a context for students and pave the way for the introduction of the text. It not only facilitates students' understanding of the text but also helps to develop their divergent thinking. The second question sets up a context similar to the text and will bring students into the topic. The context is relevant to the realities of life; when students discuss it, the teacher should encourage them to express their views so that students can form reading expectations.

4.4.2. Sorting out the Context to Develop Logical Thinking

Firstly, narrative texts generally consist of the six elements of what, when, where, who, why and how. The teacher asks students to identify information, which helps them understand the text's structure and get the text's general idea. However, in texts of continuation tasks, not all six elements are necessarily presented; for instance, "how" in this text is part of the continuation task. (As shown in Figure 1)

Who	Karie; Ms. McCormaack; Karie's Mom and Dad
When	during and after the exam
Where	at school; at home
What	Karie won a prize in the spelling competition.
Why	Karie made a spelling error, but the teacher did not find it, so she struggled with whether she deserved the prize.

Fig. 1 Elements of the story

Secondly, the teacher enlightens students that the plot of a narrative text is usually made up of five parts: beginning, development, climax, falling action and resolution. Then, the teacher asks the students: "How many parts can this text be divided into? What does each part talk about?" The teacher makes students read the article again and enables them to divide the article into five parts according to the plot development and complete a mind map. The following is a mind map of the plot development (as shown in Figure 2), of which the falling action and resolution sections are part of the continuation task. Based on the simple comprehension activity, students have some understanding of the overview of the text. With the teacher's inspiration, students can classify the article's structure and relate it to the elements of the plot. Simultaneously, Mind maps facilitate students in integrating fragmented information and structuring the plot.

Thirdly, in the continuation task, it is required that the storyline should be consistent with the original text and that the characters' emotions fit in with the original text as well. The characters' emotions change as the plot develops.

Exploring emotional changes helps students to sort out the context and promotes their logical thinking. An accurate understanding of the main character's changing emotions makes the students' writing more plausible and logical. Therefore, the teacher requires students to interpret the text in depth and guides them to create an emotional flowchart. (as shown in Figure 3) The flowchart visually and clearly shows students how Karie's emotions develop, which sets up an emotional scaffold for students. Also, the flowchart facilitates the development of logical thinking and keeps the emotions of the continuation task in alignment with the original.

4.4.3. Appreciating Language to Promote Critical Thinking

First, the teacher presents the keywords "prize" and "honesty" on the blackboard and asks the students to analyze the role of these two words in the article, which can promote the development of their critical thinking. Students quickly realize that these two words are high-frequency words and clues to the text. One of them is the "prize", which is the cause of the conflict in the article and is also mentioned at the end of the article as "whether Kaire deserves this prize". Therefore, students suggest that they should illustrate whether the teacher takes back the prize in their continuation task. Secondly, "honesty" not only serves as the title of this article and occupies a large amount of space, which implies that the aim of the text is to develop the quality of honesty. High-frequency words are often repeated or emphasized in the text, so it is important to consider how to arrange high-frequency words in the continuation task to make them consistent and compatible with the original.
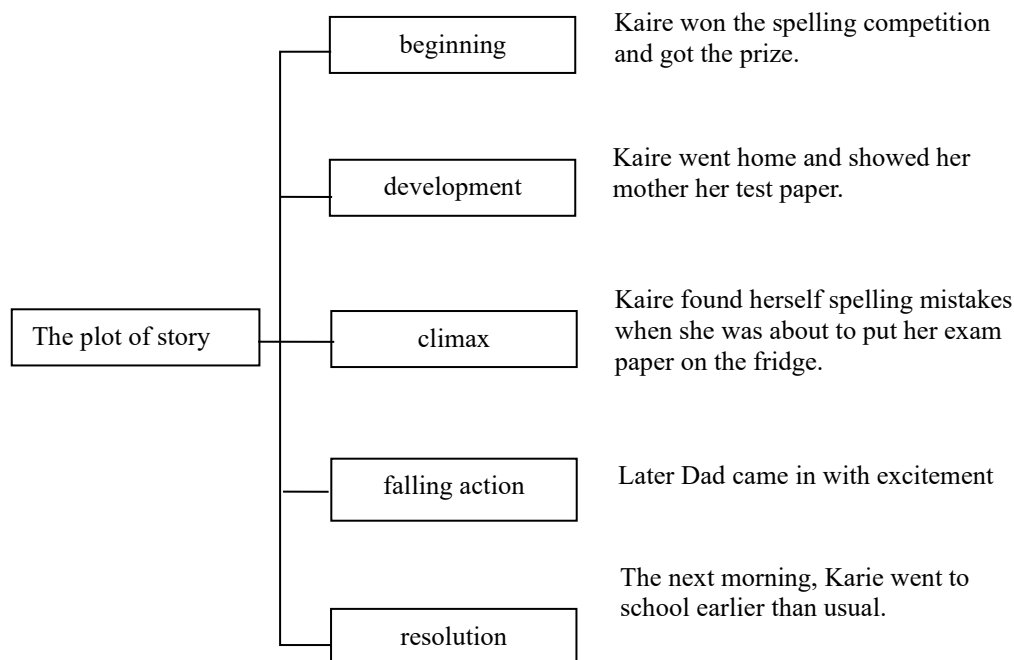

Fig. 2 Plot development map

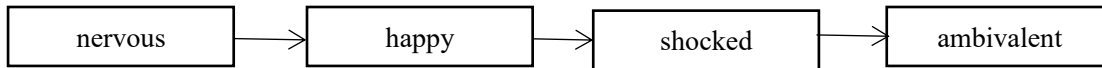| nervous | → | happy | → | shocked | → | ambivalent |

Fig. 3 Emotional change flowchart

Next, the teacher asks students to discuss in pairs, "How does the author describe Kaire's feelings?" Students are asked to identify their favorite sentences and appreciate them. After sorting out the plot development in the previous activity, students can quickly locate and point out that the text describes the characters' feelings through character descriptions. For the sentences that students prefer, they point out that the article adopts a lot of action descriptions to show Karie's feelings, and these action descriptions can portray Karie's feelings in a vivid way. For example, the author uses "sat restlessly" to show Karie's nervousness while waiting for the teacher to mark the paper, "grinned" to show Karie's happiness when winning the prize, "burst through" to show Karie's excitement when going home, "stuff" to show Karie's ambivalence, "plodded down" to show Karie's inner conflict. At the same time, some students also expressed their preference for the psychological descriptions in the form of two interrogative sentences at the end, as they could visually show Karie's entangled minds. The teacher guides students to appreciate language and infer emotional attitudes, which facilitates better imitation in continuation tasks.

4.4.4. Implementing Continuation Task to Foster Innovative Thinking

Firstly, the teacher asks students to read the continuation sentences carefully, sets up question chains to guide them to reason and make judgments about the plot, and enables them to discuss and think about the different endings within the group, which can promote the development of students' innovative thinking.

In this article, two continuation sentences are provided: *Later, Dad came in with excitement, and The next morning, Karie went to school earlier than usual*. For the two continuation sentences, the teacher carefully designs the following questions:
Q1: What would Kaire do when Dad comes in?
Q2: How was Kaire's feeling?
Q3: How would Dad respond to Kaire?
Q4: Why did Kaire go to school earlier than usual the next day?
Q5: What would Kaire do at school?
Q6: How would the teacher respond?
Q7: How did Kaire feel at the end?

For these questions, students can make innovative combinations and discuss their own endings in groups. For example, Kaire did not tell her father and stayed up all night with guilt, but after thinking about it all night, she went to school early the next day to admit her mistake to her teacher. Alternatively, Kaire told her father, and he encouraged her to apologize to her teacher, so Kaire went to bed early with a release of guilt and told her teacher early

the next day. Or perhaps Kaire did not tell either her father or her teacher, and because of the guilt, she had trouble sleeping; she went to school early the next day. In short, students can do numerous innovative rewriting for the ending while maintaining plausibility and coherence. When students finish discussing the story, the teacher requires them to independently make an outline for the continuation task and begin writing the first draft.

Finally, after students finish writing, the teacher presents an evaluation sheet (as shown in Figure 4) and allows students to evaluate members' work within the group. *National Curriculum Standard (2017 Edition)* indicates that the general high school English curriculum should establish a student-centered curriculum assessment system that promotes students' comprehensive, healthy and personalized development (Ministry of Education, 2018). Therefore, mutual evaluation within the group plays an important role in the teaching of continuation tasks. It not only triggers students' sense of readership but also allows them to discover the strengths of others and learn from others' strengths. Besides, it also gives feedback to students and provides direction for revising the first draft.

Factors	Criteria
Plot	Does your writing fit the theme? Does your writing connect well with the continuation sentence?
Language	Do you use writing skills? Does your writing conform to the original style?
Emotion	Does your writing match the emotional changes of the characters? Does your writing fit the character's personality?

Fig. 4 Continuation task evaluation form

5. Conclusion

In the teaching practice of continuation tasks, the author integrates the cultivation of thinking quality into all aspects of instructional design. This paper provides scaffolding for students in terms of plot, emotion and language to enhance the alignment between reading and writing. Firstly, the paper designs authentic contexts to activate students' thinking. Secondly, this paper helps students sort out the context through mind maps to cultivate logical thinking. Thirdly, this paper guides students to appreciate high-frequency words and writing skills to promote critical thinking. Finally, the paper inspires students to think about the direction of the ending through

question chains. It guides them to think about the rationality and logic of the ending through group work to foster their creative thinking. The activity design of this paper ranges from easy level to difficult level, transitioning from low-level thinking to high-level thinking, and ultimately achieving the goal of cultivating thinking quality.

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